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ABSTRACT

Educational television is used in Japan at the early childhood, elementary, and secondary education levels. Educational broadcasting is provided by the public broadcasting company, NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai) and various commercial broadcasting companies. Instructional aids are produced by either NHK or one of the commercial companies, and there is currently no system to develop equipment and aids within the Japanese Ministry of Education. NHK has three major sections actively engaged in educational broadcast production: (1) the School Education Section; (2) the Correspondence Education Section; and (3) the Youth Education Section. Educational television is designed to bring the outside world directly into the classroom and to generate interest, enthusiasm, and imagination for learning. NHK surveys indicate that Japanese children aged from two to four years watch an average of three hours of television each week day. However, many of the programs appear to be educational in nature, teaching customs and manners, numbers, and music. One program, "With Mother," is an audience-participation program, where children are invited to attend the program. Educational television is also incorporated into the daily, weekly, and monthly teaching plans of most pre-school and primary school teachers, and the educational objectives are clearly defined. In summary, the use of educational television is increasing in Japanese schools and there is considerable room for future expansion and development to meet new educational requirements. (22 references) (EW)

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The Role of Television In Early Childhood Education in Japan

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Introduction

At the conclusion of World War II, the school system in Japan underwent radical changes. The "six-three-three" system was established in 1947 and schooling was made compulsory for nine years; six years at the elementary (*shogakko*) level and three years at the lower secondary (*chugakko*) level. The three years spent at the upper secondary (*kotogakko*) level were not compulsory. During the same period, the co-educational system was introduced in the elementary, secondary, and higher education levels.

Before children begin compulsory schooling, pre-school kindergarten (*yochien*) education is available for the three through five year olds. *Yochien* are under the authority of the Ministry of Education Science and Culture (*Monbusho*). There are also nursery schools (*hoikuen*) which are available for pre-school education of children from zero to six years old. Nursery schools are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health and Welfare (*Koseisho*), and according to the law they were organized as welfare facilities for children without appropriate day care in their homes. But, in fact, the nursery school plays an important role in early childhood education in Japan.

In the years from 1950 to 1984, the total number of students enrolled in

Japanese schools increased 1.4 times from 19,430,000 in 1950 to 28,000,000 in 1984.[1] The total number of children enrolled in kindergartens in Japan in 1985 was 2,068,000. Although the number of kindergarten-age children (three to five years) has been decreasing since 1978, the number of three-year-old childern who enter kindergarten has been increasing. A 1985 survey by NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute indicated that 63.7% of all five-year-olds were enrolled in kindergartens in Japan.[2]

Nursery school enrollment in Japan in 1984 was 1,880,000. Although the total number of children in nursery schools has been decreasing since 1980, the enrollment of children under two-years of age has been increasing.[3] Among the major countries, Japan ranks second to France in percentage of pre-school-age children who attend educational institutions.[4]

There were 99.99% of all children aged six through fifteen enrolled in primary and lower secondary schools in Japan in 1986. The nine-year compulsory education requirement is completed by almost all children. After completing junior high school, those students who pass the entry examination continue on to senior high school. In 1986, 94.2% of all children in this age level entered senior high school compared to only 42.5% in 1950.[5]

Policies for the decentralization of the educational administration system in Japan were formulated and put into practice after World War II. Japan consists of 47 prefectures which in turn are subdivided into 3,300 municipalities. Each municipality has a Board of Education as the educational

agency for the municipality. This Board of Education is responsible for establishing and maintaining public schools, designing guidelines for educational materials and equipment, and financing intra-mural and extra-mural educational activities. Compulsory schooling is under the jurisdiction of the municipal boards of education.

The central, prefectural and municipal governments are responsible for sharing the educational financing costs. Each government has the responsibility for financing educational programs under their jurisdiction with funds coming from taxes and other income. Textbooks, distributed at no charge to all students in elementary and lower secondary schools, are paid for by the central government alone. The cost of educational materials and media to be used at schools within the framework of standards required by the central government is shared equally by the central government and the prefectural and municipal governments, or exclusively by one of them. The executive agency for educational administration by the central government is the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (*Monbusho*).

The Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education is responsible for establishing standards for educational materials and media needs for schools, developing media equipment procurement policies, guiding the development of educational media and approving school textbooks. The Audio-Visual Education Division is organized under the Social Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education.This group provides information

on audio-visual aids and assists in the production of audio-visual materials.

Educational broadcasting in Japan can be divided into two categories. The first is the public broadcasting corporation known as NHK (*Nippon Hoso Kyokai*). The second category comprises the various commercial broadcasting companies. NHK is the only non-profit public service broadcasting company in Japan. NHK receives no funds from the government or from any other organization and it is solely financed from fees collected from its viewers. It has four television channels, three radio networks, and two satellite broadcasting channels. The educational programs are broadcast on Educational TV channel (ETV) and Radio Network 2.

Status of Instructional Aids and Equipment in Japan Schools

Two types of organizations produce instructional aids in Japan. The first type produces audio-visual materials such as motion picture films, slides, transparencies, recordings, video tapes and broadcasting programs. The second type produces textbooks and other printed materials. Hardware, such as TV sets, projectors, VTRs and VCRs are all commercially produced in Japan and there is presently no system to develop equipment and aids within the Ministry of Education. Production and distribution systems are used for film and VTR/VCR audio-visual materials. Local film libraries, or media centers, purchase the materials rather than individual schools. The schools borrow

from the media centers as needed.

Educational television programs are viewed in 80% to 90% of Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools, and 98% of all elementary schools in Japan use educational television programs in their classrooms.[6] The trend is toward more use of educational television in the lower and upper secondary schools. With the installation of VTR/VCR equipment in lower secondary schools, more than half of the schools began to use educational television in 1978. There has been a 7% to 13% decrease of educational radio program use in the five year period from 1975 to 1980 as a result of the increased use of television in the classroom. However, more than 30% of elementary and secondary schools are still using educational radio programs.[7]

NHK has three major sections actively engaged in educational broadcast production: 1) School Education Section, 2) Correspondence Education Section and 3) Youth Education Section. There is a close working relationship between the three sections and other NHK sections and professional staff. The School Education Section consists of a professional staff of 120; the Correspondence Section has a staff of 95 and there are 90 staff members in the Youth Education Section.

The School Education Section is divided into groups for science, mathematics, social studies, English, music, moral education, Japanese language and special activities. There are subdivisions for kindergarten/ nursery schools, elementary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools.

Each group or team is responsible for the production of radio or television programs for broadcast each week or every other week. Group or team members are directors and producers of the programs and also serve as planners. They plan a year around schedule, conduct surveys,collect materials, and analyse course of study revisions, prefecture or school teaching plans and textbooks. Team members serve another important function by observing in classrooms and surveying users/receivers for their opinions and comments.

The main purpose of the NHK school programs are to assist the teacher in various learning activities through the use of television broadcasts. For example, television presentations are especially appropriate for social studies learning experiences. Several types of accompanying instruction manuals are published for teachers and issued once a year, and some are designed to be used by teachers and students together.

The NHK production staff is provided guidance and assistance in the planning of school education programs by committees consisting of three or four teachers for each subject and grade level. The committee members represent users and one or two of the teachers are from the All Japan Teacher's Federation for Study in the use of Radio and Television in Education (ZEMPOREN), a subject specialist, and an official from the Ministry of Education. There are local advisory committees in various prefectures in Japan that are commissioned by NHK to study the original plans for the programs and comment on any problems. NHK's educational broadcasting

programs are revised every year with the help of these advisory committees. The revisions also reflect any changes made in the course of study by the Ministry of Education.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture is responsible for setting regulations for educational materials and media to be used in the schools. The Audio-Visual Education Division, a section of the Social Education Bureau in the Ministry, has the responsibility for providing information to the school or social education section of the local board of education on audio-visual aids and materials. The Audio-Visual Education Division also gives assistance in the production of audio-visual materials for school and social education.

Educational TV Programs for Young Children in Japan

The role of television as an educational medium for young children in Japanese schools was appropriately stated by Takashiro Akiyama, of the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, in his research report on *School Broadcasts in Japan*.[8] In summary, he said TV broadcasts bring the outside world directly to the children in the classroom and generates their interest, enthusiasm and imagination for learning. Ideas are born and creativity is stimulated from good presentation on television. He further explained that children can better understand subjects, ideas and concepts through

educational television broadcasts. TV helps young children understand things they have not experienced and presents information in a compact and summarized form. Akiyama also pointed out that educational television broadcasts present the interaction of cause and effect and development of logic in a summarized manner so that children can acquire ability in logical thinking.

An NHK survey conducted in 1979 revealed that young children in Japan from two to four years of age watch television on the average of three hours each week day.[9] The study also found that some children viewed television up to eight hours per day. NHK has programs that invite young children to be participants which involve the children in games, plays, singing and dancing. Being chosen as a participant for a children's television show confers immediate prestige on the child and makes him or her an instant celebrity in the neighborhood and kindergarten or nursery school.

The NHK study conducted in 1979 also revealed that three- year-old children are the most avid viewers of television and spend a total of one hour and thirty-five minutes out of a total of three hours and thirteen minutes on concurrent television viewing. Two and four year-old children watch television slightly less than the three-year-old children, and those children over five-years of age view television the same amount of time as children in the primary grades. The study also indicated that children whose mothers control their viewing time watch television for approximately fifty minutes

less than those mothers who exert no control at all, and those mothers with a higher level of education were more apt to control their child's television viewing time.

The Forum of Children's Television, a volunteer group of mothers who study the effects of television on children, examined for a one week period in 1981 the television programs produced for young children from pre-school through the primary grades and broadcast during the evening hours by five television stations in the Tokyo metropolitan area. During that time period the study group found that eighty-two programs for children were broadcast for twenty-nine hours.[10] Several popular omnibus programs for young children were broadcast during this time period. These included *With Mothers* by NHK, *Open! Pong-Ki-Ki* and *Play with Mamma* and *Ping-Pong-Pang* by Fuji TV, and *Circular Machine* by NTV. *Open! Pong-Ki-Ki* is similar to *Seasame Street* and *Circular Machine* is designed to help young children's number concepts and language.

Seven series of educational television programs are produced by NHK for nursery schools and kindergarten classes (NHK School Broadcasts, 1987). The program *Hey, Hanimaru* emphasizes the correct ways of speaking, customs , and manners and features clay images called *haniwa* ; *Piko-piko-pon* is designed to help children improve basic perception of numbers, quantities, and diagrams; *Can You Do It* features a young man doing pantomine and a strange creature creating various kinds of plastic arts; *Friendly Rhythms* is

a musical program; *Puppet Show* is a program that features stories about Japan and other countries; and *Look at That* is designed to expand children's minds by drawing their attention to the common things around them.[11] These programs are broadcast on three differerent days and times per week. NHK also produces a program called *With Mother* which is intended for the young preschool children and features simple stories, songs and exercises. This is an audience-participation program, in which the children are invited to the studio to participate in the program.

NHK produces half of its educational television programs for primary schools. Science programs are presented in six series. A program about ethical problems discusses themes on friendship and parent-child relationships. Other programs for the primary grades feature social studies, history, music, art, mathematics, logic, and literature. Three non-subject documentary programs are being broadcast by NHK for the primary grades: *Let's All Go For It*, which shows good ways to associate with people; *The Human Family*, which approaches the question "What is a human being?" ; and *We're All Citizens of Earth*, which deals with the issues of nature, society and culture.[12]

Educational television is incorporated into the daily, weekly, and monthly teaching plan by most teachers in the pre-school and primary grades and the educational objectives are clearly defined. During their pre-school years, children in Japan watch educational television in the classroom,

usually in the morning. Preparatory teaching on program content is carried out by many teachers before allowing children to view the program. Programs featuring songs and dances are later created anew by the children, handicraft programs are used to encourage children to develop their creative abilities, and programs on nature and society help children to appreciate and learn how to preserve their environment. Television programs with puppet shows stimulate children's verbal ability to discuss the story, consider the feelings of the characters in the story and imagine the next development of the story.

Summary

The use of educational television is increasing in the schools in Japan and there is considerable room for future expansion and development to meet new educational requirements. At present (1987), 30 educational radio programs totaling 7 hours and 30 minutes per week, and color television educational programs totaling 32 hours and 15 minutes per week are broadcast to the schools of Japan by NHK studios.

Educational television programs are viewed in 80% to 90% of Japanese kindergartens and nursery schools, and 98% of the elementary schools use educational television programs in their classrooms. The trend is toward more use of educational television in lower and upper secondary schools. The vigorousness and stability of Japan's educational television reflects the

power of its parent organizations, the Ministry of Education and NHK. Instructional television is another component of the Japanese educational system and reflects the great zeal that the Japanese people have for education.

Notes

[1] Japan, Management and Coordination Agency; Statistics Bureau, *Japan Statistical Yearbook 1985* (Tokyo: Statistics Bureau, 1985), p. 646.

[2] Sachiko Imaizumi Kodaira, *Television's Role in Early Childhood Education in Japan* (Tokyo: NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 1987), p. 5.

[3] *Ibid*, p. 6.

[4] Japan, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, *Educational Standards in Japan-1980,* Trans. Foreign Press Center-Japan (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, 1981), p. 2.

[5] Takashiro Akiyama and Sachiko Imaizumi Kodaira, *The Role of Educational Broadcasts in Japanese Schools,* 2nd edition (Tokyo: NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute,1986), p. 2.

[6] Kodaira, p. 7.

[7] National Institute for Educational Research, *A Case Study of Educational Materials and Media in Japan,* Prepared for UNESCO (Tokyo: National Institute for Educational Research, 1981), p. 30.

[8] Takashiro Akiyama, *School Broadcasts in Japan* (Tokyo: NHK Radio and TV Culture Research Institute, 1976), p. 14.

[9] Akiyama and Kodaira, p. 24.

[10] Takashi Sakamoto, "Television for Young Children in Japan," *Prospects: Quarterly Review of Education,* 22, No. 3 (1982), p. 359.

[11] Takashiro Akiyama, *NHK School Broadcasts 1987* (Tokyo: NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, 1987), p. 14.

[12] *Ibid*, p. 17.

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